

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 January 2011**

### **Present:-**

<b>Members of the Committee</b>	Councillor Sarah Boad
	“ Richard Chattaway
	“ Jeff Clarke
	“ Barry Lobbett
	“ Mike Gittus
	“ Phillip Morris-Jones
	“ Martin Shaw
	“ Ray Sweet
	“ John Whitehouse (Chair)
	“ Chris Williams

**Other County Councillors** Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety)

**Officers** Sara-Louise Board, Concessionary Travel Project Manager  
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways  
Glenn Fleet, Manager, Environment and Resources  
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator  
Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Mark Ryder, Head of Trading Standards, Heritage and Culture  
Martin Stott, Head of Environment and Resources

(The order of these minutes is as they appear on the agenda and do not reflect the order in which they were considered).

### **1. General**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **(1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Cockburn and Hayfield.

#### **(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None.

#### **(3) Minutes of the meetings of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 November 2010 and 29 November 2010**

The Chair thanked Ann Mawdsley for producing two excellent sets of minutes from lengthy and complicated meetings.

### **3 November 2010**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 November were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### **Matters Arising**

##### **Page 15 – 10. Committee Work Programme and suggested topics for Task and Finish Groups**

The Chair reported that the Briefing Notes on On-street Parking and Community Empowerment had both been received by Members.

### **29 November 2010**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 November 2010 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

##### **Page 4 – 2.9 Rugby Western Relief Road (RWRR)**

Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones asked that it be noted that while the original contract had been awarded to Mowlem, which was subsequently taken over by Carillion, rather than the contract automatically transferring to Carillion a decision could have been made to award the contract to one of the other original five qualifying tenders at that stage. The Chair asked that this issue be included in the information provided to the Committee at the meeting to consider the RWRR.

#### **(4) Chair's Announcements**

Members are reminded that the Council considered both the High Speed 2 Rail and the Rugby Western Relief Road on 14 December.

##### **High Speed Rail 2 (HS2)**

The Chair reminded Members of the resolution agreed by the Council relating to and noted that he would be meeting with the Party Spokespersons, Mandy Walker and Michelle McHugh to consider the role of Overview and Scrutiny over the next months when the proposed route for HS2 and the Government's broader strategy for high speed rail will be subject to public consultation, starting in February.

## **Rugby Western Relief Road**

Following the meeting on 29 November and the Chair's report that was considered by full Council on 14 December, the next step is to hold a further meeting of the Communities OSC in Rugby, which was likely to be in early March. The Chair reported that confirmation had been received from Legal Services that there were no longer any impediments to the full disclosure of documents to the public.

## **Impact of the Budget on Libraries**

Arrangements were underway to hold a special meeting early in February to consider the impact of the Budget on Libraries in Warwickshire. The Chair noted concerns raised regarding the length of time this had taken in relation to the budget setting process. He added that judgments had been made on the information provided and that this meeting would still allow the Committee an opportunity to scrutinise any potential impact on libraries.

Further concerns were raised that Portfolio Holders were not attending O&S meetings on a regular basis to answer questions put forward by members of the Committee. The Chair stated that this was an issue faced by all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and that he would be proposing at the Overview and Scrutiny Board that this issue be raised with the Leader.

## **2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

## **3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder**

### Councillor Richard Hobbs

1. Councillor Richard Chattaway asked the Portfolio Holder how many potential redundancy notices had been served in Fire and Rescue, broken down to service and non-service personnel.

Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, undertook to e-mail this information to members of the Committee.

2. Councillor Mike Gittus asked the Portfolio Holder, in anticipation of the announcement expected from the Chief Constable, whether there were any indications that any police stations in Warwickshire could be decommissioned.

Councillor Richard Hobbs responded by saying that the list would be extensive in Warwickshire, particularly where it was

felt that police stations were no longer necessary. He added that Warwickshire Police force had already teamed up with Warwickshire County Council and Warwick and Stratford District Council to deliver police front desk enquiries from the front office at Globe House, Alcester and Shire Hall, Warwick. Difficult decisions would have to be made involving the police workforce in Warwickshire, including at the Leek Wooten site, but other ways to deliver savings were also being considered such as mobile data terminals to allow for working and information provision to be done by police on the beat.

3. Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones asked whether the abandoned Regional Fire Control Centre in Wolverhampton would have an impact on the Estates Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder replied that these issues were not related. He updated Members on the announcement that had been made on 20 December that the company would be dissolved and the project abandoned. This meant that the Fire Control premises were no longer needed. He added that in Warwickshire the fire control system was not fit for purpose and this would need to be rectified quickly. In the long-term Warwickshire would have to look at collaborative working with other agencies and regions, and in the short-term the possibility of plugging in to the control centre used by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service on a temporary basis was being considered. This option would involve using their technology and not their staff.

4. Councillor Richard Chattaway stated that he accepted the difficulties for the Portfolio Holder as a member of the Police Authority and the County Council. He asked for a special meeting to be arranged to look at the Warwickshire Police Force, with an invitation to be given to the Deputy Chief Constable to speak to the Committee. Councillor Chattaway also asked for a Briefing Note on the Fire Control Centre to be provided for members of the O&S Committee as soon as possible.

The Chair noted that these issues would be discussed in the next Chair and Party Spokespersons meeting.

5. The Chair asked the Portfolio Holder what the status was in regard to the Alternative Savings Proposals for the Fire and Rescue Service currently available on the Members' Intranet.

Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that this was a document that had been produced at the inception of savings plans in response to being asked to consider what a cut to the budget of 30% might look like. The Portfolio Holder supported

this, saying that SDLT and the Cabinet had asked all Directorates to produce 30% savings plans, which had since been rejected.

6. Councillor Martin Shaw asked for an update on his previous request that work be done with the media to publish Fire and Rescue incidents.

Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that the Fire and Rescue Service were taking a holistic approach, working with the County Council to publicise the work they were doing. A twitter site had been set up following the Fire and Rescue Service and all incidents were streamed onto this site. There were already 50 followers, many of whom were media based, and it was hoped that this would be developed further in the future.

7. The Chair asked for an update on the vigilante groups that had advertised their security services in Kenilworth.

The Portfolio Holder stated that these groups were legal entities, and as long as they worked within the constraints of the law, could continue to operate. He added that his understanding was that the actual financial take-up of the project had been lower than the expected 50% and that there had been no complaints or media reports since Christmas.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hobbs for his responses.

#### **4. Long Term Strategy for Waste Disposal**

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from Martin Stott, Head of Environment and Resources, on Warwickshire's Long Term Strategy for Waste Disposal.

During the discussion that ensued the following points arose:

1. The County Council needed to start to divert the 53,000 tonnes of waste that needed to be treated by means other than landfill by 2016/17. There were different ways this could be processed and no reason why companies that had permission to process such material, such as Cemex, could not tender for this.
2. The County had introduced a Master Composting Scheme with Garden Organic Ryton following the success of the Master Gardening Scheme, to raise public awareness, encourage and support people in home composting to reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill. Home composting had the advantages of reducing collections and lowering the impact on the environment.

3. It was important in moving forward to get the balance right, taking into account the County Council contract to provide a minimum quantity of waste to Ufton for a further 13 years, but also considering that not all properties had the facilities to recycle and not all residents were able to or chose to recycle.
4. Every effort had been made in working with District and Borough Councils to improve recycling rates and mitigate fines for not meeting targets. Recycling rates in Stratford, Warwick and Rugby were all above targets and there had been considerable improvement in Nuneaton and Bedworth. North Warwickshire continued to be expensive to the County as the disposal authority. The Chair added that he was a member of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership, which included members from all the District/Borough Council, and that there had been unsuccessful proposals to moved towards a joint waste agreement/authority, but that this was not the current direction of travel.
5. E&E had recently carried out a waste audit to identify what was still being thrown away in the black bins, etc. This had provided data that would enable the Directorate to campaign and focus their resources in the right areas.
6. All authorities, including Warwickshire, were looking at alternatives to getting rid of waste. The Chair noted that in terms of future debates, technical choices going forward would be an important issue, and the Council would need to be looking to creating electricity rather than using it.
7. Take up rates of any recycling system determined the impact on costs and value, and it was agreed that any system had to be made as easy as possible for people to recycle at kerbside, and the most popular choice that offered best value for money was a single bin for all recycling.
8. There was some discussion around different methods of recycling and collection in different areas in the County. Martin Stott noted that separate recycling inside homes allowed the authority to get a higher price for selling purer material.
9. Martin Stott confirmed that Project Transform would formally end in March 2011. Warwickshire County Council, as a joint partner in Project Transform, had rights to all intellectual property relating to this project, including the Waste Growth Model. Martin Stott did point out however, that with the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy and housing targets, policy landscape had changed and any developments coming out of Project Transform would have to be reviewed accordingly.
10. Councillor Richard Chattaway asked that when this item was discussed at a future meeting, that the Portfolio Holder responsible for waste should be invited to give his vision for waste management and how he intended to deliver this. The Chair added that future reports should look at collection and costs as well as the disposal side of the strategy.

The Chair thanked Martin Stott for his presentation and noted that at the next Chair/Party Spokesperson meeting, that an agreement be made on the way forward and whether this should involve regular reports as the Strategy developed, or a Task and Finish Group to be commissioned to work alongside the Directorate at that stage in policy development.

## **5. Concessionary Travel Project and Risk Management**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy setting out the project management and risk mitigation processes in relation to the Concessionary Travel Project.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Guidance from DfT had been received on 29 November 2010 and Warwickshire County Council had issued a draft scheme on 1 December 2010. The initial settlement for Warwickshire was £6.7m, and it was possible that if there was a surge in uptake, there could be a revenue shortfall. Graeme Fitton added that there were too many variables to take into account to be able to accurately anticipate take-up and use. A further bid had been put in that was higher than the current offer, but the results of this were as yet unknown.
2. Reimbursements were made against the average fare on a route. All providers were required to have smart card systems by August 2011 and this would alter the way reimbursements were calculated.
3. Although rates were negotiated based on guidance rather than absolutes, a lot of work had been done in Warwickshire “to get the most buses for the money available” and Warwickshire had one of the lowest rates of reimbursement across the country.
4. Members welcomed the undertaking to continue to allow concessionary travel from 9:00 am.
5. In light of the strategic review of ESPO being undertaken, officers were asked what value ESPO had brought to the project through their involvement. Sara Board praised ESPO’s clear processes, procedures and involvement in the project, adding that this had allowed the tender to be expanded to a national framework.
6. An Information Sheet would be sent out to Members at the end of January giving a general update and the message for Warwickshire residents was that “there would be no change, everything was fine and would be better than before”.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and commended the officers involved and the Economy and Environment management for the way the project had been managed.

The Committee agreed to commend to the Cabinet the project approach that had been taken and to support the need for Warwickshire to continue to ensure this service and to continue to bid for any monies made available from central Government.

## **6. Heritage and Culture Proposals**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy providing an update on proposals for transforming Heritage and Cultural Services.

Mark Ryder introduced the report, setting out the background to the proposals and the plans for moving forward with a more business-like focus across services, reducing costs and improving services for customers.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. In response to a query regarding the possibility of a more radical, overall transfer of services to outside the County Council, Mark Ryder noted that on early investigations there did not appear to be any successful models for the whole suite of services currently offered by the County Council. He added however that currently the turnover from these services outweighed the revenue support, so there was the ability to continue and revisit different options in the future.
2. The Chair asked what Warwickshire's position was in regard to the national debate taking place over charging for museum entry and the trend not to charge. Mark Ryder noted that entry into museums was not specifically charged for, but this was a small part that would not alter the big picture in terms of revenue.
3. Any proposals for the future would have to be based on the best protocols for the cultural heritage of Warwickshire and the best protection for user experience.
4. The three front doors of the County Records Office and the two museums in Warwick would remain.
5. Every effort would be made to expand the online services, which provided an international interface.
6. In response to a query regarding the impact on revenue through not being able to pay with a credit/debit card in the museum, it was noted that there were issues with card payments but that online payment services could be processed countywide.
7. Warwickshire's military museums had a high standing nationally and dialogue was ongoing with the District/Borough Councils and the military to ensure the Warwickshire-wide story was told.
8. Mark Ryder undertook to clarify for the Committee the cost of the consultant referred to in 1.5 of the report.

Having considered the proposals to transform the heritage and culture services, the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed



to include an update report in their work programme at an appropriate time.

## **7. Committee Work Programme and suggested topics for Task and Finish Groups**

The Committee agreed the Work Programme items with the following additions/clarifications:

- A date was still to be set to consider the Review of Libraries report
- The further meeting to consider the Rugby Western Relief Road was likely to be in early March. Potential dates would be distributed shortly.
- Climate Change – date still to be determined.
- LEPs – This would be included in the remit of the Supporting the Local Economy Task and Finish Group.
- Alcohol Implementation Plan – This report would be considered at the 1 March meeting.
- Casualty Reduction/Safety Cameras - This report would be considered at the 1 March meeting.

Suggestions for future Task and Finish Groups (which would be discussed by the Chair and Party Spokespersons) were:

- Waste Disposal, including technologies.

## **8. Any Other Items**

Councillor Richard Chattaway thanked Graeme Fitton and his team for the excellent work done by the Highways team in keeping the roads clear over the recent bad weather.

Councillor Sarah Board pointed out that Members had not received any information on the state of Warwickshire roads, as had happened in previous years. The Chair asked that Graeme Fitton be asked to comment on this.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 4:30 p.m.